

EMOTION AND ATTRIBUTION OF INTENTIONALITY IN LEADER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we present a model of emotions and attributions of intentionality within the leader-member relationship. The model is predicated on two central ideas. The first is that leadership is intrinsically an emotional process, where leaders display emotion, and attempt to evoke emotion in their members. The second is that leadership is a process of social interaction and is therefore appropriately defined in terms of social psychological theories such as attribution theory. Our focus is on the perspective of members, not the leaders. Specifically, members' attributions about their leader's intentions influence how the members evaluate, interpret, and eventually label the leader's influence attempts as either 'true' or 'pseudo' transformational leadership. These attributions are determined by and themselves influence the members' emotions. We describe each of the elements of the model, and conclude with discussion of the implications of the model for theory, research, and practice.

EMOTION AND ATTRIBUTION OF INTENTIONALITY IN LEADER-MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS

Leadership is a process of social interaction where leaders attempt to influence the behavior of their followers (Yukl, 2002). As such, and as Calder (1977) and Martinko and Gardner (1987) suggest, leadership is appropriately defined in terms of basic social psychology theories such as attribution theory. In this paper, we present a model of emotion and attribution of intentionality within the leader-member relationship, where emotional intelligence plays a central role and the focus is on the leader-member interaction. Our model is based initially on Ferris, Bhawuk, Fedor, and Judge (1995), who discuss more general interactions between actors and observers in organizations. Here, we adapt their model to focus on transformational leader behaviors, how the behaviors are perceived by members observing the behaviors, and the role of emotions in the formation of member perceptions of the interaction.

Researchers such as Gerstner and Day (1997) and Howell and Hall-Merenda (1999) have noted that members observe leader behaviors as part of the leader-member relationship. Green and Mitchell (1979) were the first to identify the link between attributions and leader-member exchange relationships (see also Ashkanasy, 1989). Later, Dienesch and Liden (1986) stressed that attributions and categorizations serve as critical inputs to the development of the relationship between leaders and those who follow them. The question arises, however, as to members' ability to perceive and to interpret their leader's intentions accurately. Specifically, when a leader attempts to influence his or her members, can the members discern if she or he is acting sincerely for the benefit of the organization and its employees? Or is the leader acting

manipulatively to achieve egocentric personal goals? In this paper, we propose a model to explain this process based on theories of attribution of intentionality and emotional intelligence.

In our examination of the leader-member relationship, we concentrate on the charismatic and transformational qualities of the leaders' behavior. These types of leadership behaviors have motivational effects on the members, eliciting emotional arousal in the members to achieve a vision (see Cherulnik, Donley, Wiewel & Miller, 2001). In Bass's (1998) view, transformational leaders inspire their members to achieve a vision, such that the members feel highly motivated and strongly connected to the leader. This inspiration and motivation results from the leader's displayed confidence and enthusiasm, and his or her awareness of the emotional needs of members (Cherulnik, et al., 2001). Thus, as suggested by George (2000), transformational leadership is essentially based on emotional processes. Further, while some researchers (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999) have noted the potential for linking transformational leadership and leader-member relationships, with the possible exception of Deluga (2001), theoretical integration of these two areas continues to be generally unexplored. This is especially surprising in view of Bass's (1998) contention that transformational leadership constitutes a superior form of leadership.

Further, Conger (1990) has drawn attention to the 'dark side' of transformational leadership, whereby the leader's ability to influence the members may be used to achieve undesirable aims. Bass, Avolio, & Atwater (1996) coined the term *pseudo* transformational leadership to differentiate this from *true* transformational leadership, where the leadership is a positive force operating to achieve legitimate organizational objectives. Pseudo transformational leaders, however, may display similar types of behaviors as those of a true transformational

leader, so that the difficulty for members is to determine if the leader's intentions or motives are legitimate.

Our proposed model contributes to Ashforth and Humphrey's (1995) call to incorporate emotions in the study of transformational leadership, since emotions are an integral and inseparable part of everyday organizational life. We include emotional intelligence (Mayer & Salovey, 1993, 1995, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) as a moderating variable in our model. Emotional intelligence has become a popular topic in management, as evidenced by recent articles (e.g., Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2000) and book sales (e.g., Goleman, 1998; Bar-On, 1997). The construct, however, has also been criticised as lacking in empirically established validity (e.g., Barrett, 2000; Davies, Stankov, & Roberts, 1998). In this respect, scholars in the management sciences have recently begun to take a more serious academic interest in the emotional intelligence construct (e.g., see Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 2000; Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Härtel, in press), and in particular its impact on leadership. We argue here that the emotional intelligence of the members will influence their perceptions of leader behavior motives. In turn, this determines if members label the leader's influence attempt as true or pseudo transformational leadership. On the other side of the equation, we also propose that the emotional intelligence of leaders will influence their ability to influence the members' perceptions of their transformational behaviors (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 2000).

This paper is laid out in four parts, as follows. First, we define and discuss true and pseudo transformational leadership. We then introduce the idea of attributions of intentionality, and how this may be applied to the leader-member relationship context. In the third part, we propose and explain our model of intentionality, and outline the role played in the process by

emotional intelligence. In the final section, we consider the implications for research, theory and practice arising from our model.

TRUE AND PSEUDO TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The focus of the model proposed in this paper is on attributional and emotional responses to transformational leadership behaviors. In particular, we examine the distinction between true transformational leadership and pseudo transformational leadership. Yukl (2002) defines leadership as an influence of processes affecting interpretation of events for members, the choice of objectives for the organization, the organization of work activities to accomplish the objectives, motivation of members to achieve the objectives, maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork, and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the organization. As suggested by this definition, to understand the concept of leadership, the members must be considered (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Cherulnik et al., 2001). As consequence, our model is framed around the idea of leader-member relationships from the members' perspective.

Transformational leaders charismatically inspire their members to achieve a vision, such that the members feel highly motivated and strongly connected to the leader (Bass, 1998). The elements of transformational leadership are individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and "charisma or idealised influence (attributed or behavioral)" (Bass, & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 184; see also Bass, et al., 1996; Avolio & Bass, 1995; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Transformational leadership thus embraces charisma. In this respect, Bass and Stogdill (1990) have noted that charisma accounts for most of the variance in transformational leadership studies and that often the terms transformational leadership and charismatic leadership are used interchangeably.

In addition, Cherulnik et al., (2001) and Weierter (1997) have argued that charismatic leadership results from the social relationship between leaders and members, rather than from an individual leader's personality in isolation. Weierter argues in particular that members react to the leader's charismatic personality or to the leader's charismatic message, but that their interpretation of charismatic leadership depends on the member's personal attributes. Conger (1990) notes further that a charismatic leader can have a large and unusual impact on some members, such that these members feel strongly affiliated with the leader and have an unquestionable willingness to obey their leader's instructions.

Ashkanasy and Tse (2000) attribute this power to the charismatic leader exercising control over his or her own emotions, as well as control over members' emotions. Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) argue similarly that the role of a leader involves displaying emotion and evoking emotion in others, while Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson (1994) note that effective leaders are those who are able to move members through their emotions. Martinko and Gardner (1987) also emphasized the role that affective reactions play in determining members' reactions to leadership influence. For these reasons, and despite some detractors (e.g., Davies, et al., 1998; Barrett, 2000), we turn to the recent literature that suggests that the construct of emotional intelligence contributes to effective leadership (e.g., see George, 2000; Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000).

Howell (1988) and Conger (1990) note that a key function of leaders is to control resources and information (see also Weierter, 1997). Consequently, leaders have the potential to manipulate members and to use evasive tactics. In addition, Conger (1990) suggests that transformational leaders have the potential to initiate negative outcomes because of their special skills that enable them to motivate members to perform extraordinary feats. The transformational

leadership skills Conger refers to are the ability to manage members' impressions and to create and communicate a vision. These skills can be used for good, but can also lead to destructive behaviors, such as exaggerated claims for the vision, manipulation of audiences through images of uniqueness, and distracting attention away from negative outcomes.

In the case of *true* transformational leadership, leaders still effectively 'manipulate' members but, as Owen (1986) notes, in this instance manipulation refers to management and skilful utilization of human resources. From an attribution perspective, Ferris, et al., (1995) argue that a positive view of manipulation by an actor is a result of the interaction between the perceiver's perception of the actor's behavioral intentions and the consequences of the actor's behavior for the perceiver. True transformational leaders transform their organization through enticing members to join them in achieving their visionary goals, and motivating them to behave in a way that contributes to their overall organizational plan (Bass, 1998; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Bass and Steidlmeier also point out that authentic transformational leadership is grounded on a strong ethical and moral foundation. True transformational leadership is a positive form of leadership, which involves having an external orientation (as opposed to an internal orientation), where the emphasis is on serving the organization rather than oneself (Bass, 1998; Howell, 1988).

Pseudo transformation leadership, on the other hand is the 'the dark side' of transformational leadership (Howell, 1988; Conger, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1992). Weierter (1997) argues that transformational leaders may be destructive if they are self-serving, with an internal focus. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) support this view, stating that these pseudo transformational leaders behave unethically and immorally. The behavior of these leaders is said to be problematic when their behaviors are focused purely on personal gain, become exaggerated, or lose touch with reality (Conger, 1990). In the case of pseudo transformational

leadership the leader uses her skills to manipulate members in a controlling manner considered to be insidious or unfair by the member (see Owen, 1986; Ferris et al., 1995). Deluga (2001) compares this type of behavior with Machiavellianism (cf. Christie & Geis, 1970).

To understand this process in more depth, we turn to Ferris et al. (1995), who postulated a model of personal influence based on attribution of intentionality. In their model, perception of manipulation by the an actor is a result of the interaction between the perceiver's attributions of the actor's intentions and the personal consequences of the actor's behavior for the perceiver. Translating this to the specific context of leader-member relationships, and because pseudo and true transformational leaders can appear to have the same skills and to manifest similar behaviors (see Deluga, 2001), we argue that it must be the members' perceptions of these elements that determines if the leader is labelled as a true or pseudo transformational leader. We suggest further that manipulative pseudo transformational behaviors may not be obvious to most members, so only astute members will recognize them. Consequently, we highlight the importance of emotional intelligence as a determining factor of members' ability to detect these behaviors; and also of a pseudo transformational leader's ability to conceal his or her true intentions.

ATTRIBUTIONS OF INTENTIONALITY

As we noted earlier, it is often difficult for members to distinguish between true and pseudo transformational leadership because the behaviors exhibited by leaders in both categories may be similar. Ferris, et al. (1995) suggest that attributions regarding motives or intentions can represent a key triggering mechanism in construct definition and differentiation. They indicate that differentiation may be a function of the cognitive evaluation, interpretation, and assignment of meaning to observed behaviors. Bitter and Gardner (1995) also stress that

the leader's personality, as well as the nature of the leader-member relationship, can profoundly influence the kinds of attributions that members will make for their leader's behavior. They note further that organizational members may either gravitate toward or avoid the leader based on their observations. Thus, we propose that member attributions regarding leader intentions in organizational settings will determine the members' perceptions of the leadership behavior and their subsequent classification of leadership type.

Perceived Intentionality and Leadership

People make sense of another person's behavior through their perceptions of the other's intentions (Thomas & Pondy, 1977). But actual behavior can only be interpreted if the intention underlying the action is first identified (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Dienesch and Linden (1986) introduce the idea of member attributions as being determinants of the leader-member exchange relationship quality. They specifically hint at the importance of member perceptions of leader intentions based on their choice of assignments and responsibilities, for example do the members perceive: "I am being used"; or "the leader is trying to help me develop professionally" (p.629). Fedor (1991) empirically examined the impact of perceived leader intentions. He found support for the view that the perceptions of the supervisor's intentions play an important role in influencing subordinate responses to feedback. Ferris et al. (1995) support this view of perceived intentionality, stating that how we perceive others' motives for behavior will have impact our interpretation and reaction following that behavior.

The specific leadership behavior we address is transformational leadership; commonly measured by the MLQ (Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire), where members report on the impressions they have formed about their leader (Bass & Avolio, 1997). This highlights the importance of leader motives and intentions in the examination of transformational leadership.

In this respect, Shamir (1991) has called for more research on members' specific attributions, in an attempt to learn more about transformational leadership. Our model addresses this concern, highlighting the role of members in differentiating between the two types of leaders. From our previous discussion on the distinction between true and pseudo transformational leaders, we highlight in particular the centrality of leader motivations and intentions as a means to differentiate between the two.

Intentionality in the Attribution Process

Ferris et al. (1995) argue that observers make sense of an actor's underlying motives through an attribution process. The central idea of attribution theory, as originally postulated by Heider (1958), is that people behave as "naïve scientists", in that they search for the causes of their own and others' behavior through making and testing hypotheses. According to Regan (1978), people feel a need to find causal explanations for behavior so they can feel that they control elements of their environment. The causes of behavior, known as the intention/motives, are therefore central to attribution theory (Ferris, et al., 1995). In the context of leader-member interactions, leader motives and intentions are critical, because the characteristics and behaviors of the leader may not provide the means to differentiate between the two types of leadership.

A MODEL OF EMOTIONS AND LEADERSHIP INTENTIONALITY

The model presented in Figure 1 is adapted from the one presented in Ferris, et al. (1995). Ferris and his colleagues developed their model as a more general explanation of responses to influence, and refer to the influencing agent as the "actor" and the recipient of the influence as the "perceiver". Our adaptation of the model emphasises the role of emotions in the leader-member relationship; we specifically use the terms 'leader' and 'member', and incorporate emotions-related variables into the model. We acknowledge the fact that moods

and emotions may be spread implicitly through unconscious emotional contagion, vicarious affect, behavioral entrainment, and interaction synchrony (Kelly & Barsade, 2001; see Cherulnik et al., 2001). For the purpose of this paper, however, we focus on the role of emotions in the conscious process of forming attributions of intentionality.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Specifically, our model identifies factors influencing attributions that are proposed to affect member reactions and behaviors to leadership influence attempts within a leader-member relationship. The members' attributions about the leader's motives serve as a trigger to influence how leader behavior is cognitively evaluated, interpreted, and labelled. Consistent with Ferris et al., we argue that leader characteristics, leader behavior, and situational norms, along with prior interactions and member characteristics, contribute to the formation of attributions. These attributions impact how members perceive leadership behavior as sincere or manipulative. This has consequences for the members and leaders as individuals, leader-member relationship quality, and ultimately for the organization as a whole (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). Each of these factors is discussed in the following sections.

Characteristics of the Leader

We consider the mood of the leader as being an important variable influencing member attribution of leader behavior. George (1995) found that leader positive mood is positively associated with group performance. Since leadership is a process of social interaction (Calder, 1977), leader moods should thus influence how members perceive leader behavior. For this reason we propose:

Proposition 1a When leaders are in a positive mood (state affect), members are more likely to attribute leader behavior to sincere organizational intentions.

Proposition 1b: When leaders are in a negative mood (state affect), members are more likely to attribute leader behavior to manipulative self-serving intentions.

Ferris et al. (1995) indicate that personality characteristics and political skills of actors significantly influence their ability to effectively manage attributions of genuineness, sincerity and positive intentionality. Cherulnik et al. (2001) argue that the personalities of individual leaders play a strong part in their behaviors, as well as the members' reaction to their leadership behaviors. In our model examining leader-member interactions, we consider two characteristics of the leader's personality: emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism.

Emotional intelligence is important because of the role of a leader involves displaying emotion and evoking emotion in others (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as "the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 5). George (2000) and Ashkanasy and Tse (2000) argue specifically that emotional intelligence contributes to effective leadership, and transformational leadership in particular. True transformational and pseudo transformational leaders display similar behaviors, which are enhanced through emotional intelligence (George, 2000). Thus,

Proposition 2: Leaders with high emotional intelligence, because they are more in control of their emotions, are more likely to be able to present an impression that they are behaving in a true transformational manner than those with low emotional intelligence, regardless of their intentions or motives.

Machiavellianism (or Mach) is the second personality trait in our model. Deluga (2001) and Ferris et al. (1995) argue in particular that Mach is a critical personality characteristic of leaders. Christie and Geis (1970) describe high Machs as being manipulative and skilled at influencing others. Ferris et al. suggest further that high Machs are better at concealing their true intentions and are therefore able to manage the perceiver's attributions of intentionality. Deluga notes that members often confuse charisma and Machiavellianism. Following from this:

Proposition 3: Leaders high on Machiavellianism, since they are able to conceal their intentions from members, may be perceived as being true transformational leaders, when they are in reality pseudo transformational leaders.

Leader Behavior and Situational Norms

Transformational leadership is intrinsically an effective leadership style (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). According to George (2000), there are five elements of effective leadership as described by Yukl (2002) and Conger and Kanungo (1998): (1) develop collective goals; (2) instill knowledge and appreciation of work; (3) generate motivation and build trust; (4) encourage flexibility; and (5) maintain meaningful organizational identity.

Ashkanasy and Tse (2000) argue that pseudo transformational leaders and true transformational leaders “use the same means to achieve different ends” (p. 224). Thus, we propose that these particular leader behaviors may be exhibited by both true transformational leaders, and by their pseudo transformational counterparts. Our model suggests that the particular leader behaviors will not distinguish between the two classifications of leaders; instead, differentiation will be based on the intentions or motives behind the leader behaviors and how members perceive them.

Weierter (1997) notes in addition that attribution processes are situationally bound. The leader behaviors previously described may be perceived and interpreted differently depending on the political norms of the situation (see also Ferris et al., 1995). To learn what is acceptable and unacceptable, members observe leadership behaviors and their impact on the leader-member relationship. Rafaeli and Sutton (1989) discuss the importance of situational norms in displaying emotions successfully, which is a critical element of transformational leadership. Situational norms are important in that they can result in some leadership behaviors being perceived as genuine as opposed to being perceived as deceitful or manipulative (Ferris et al., 1995).

According to Fiske and Taylor (1984), situational norms also determine member inferences made about qualitative and quantitative aspects of leader behaviors. In respect to the qualitative aspect, situated identity refers to the social interaction pattern of behavior that conveys optimal identity for a particular setting (Ferris et al., 1995). It is the norm for leaders to try to conform to the particular pattern of behaviors identified, so their actions will be perceived as acceptable and legitimate (Fiske & Taylor, 1984).

Finally, as Baron (1989) and Jones (1990) have pointed out, leadership influence attempts can be overdone. For example, regular efforts to manipulate others, or the excessive use of impression management tactics, may suggest that the leader has ulterior motives, so that the leader's intentions are likely to be perceived by members as questionable. Therefore:

Proposition 4: Particular types of leadership behaviors and how often they are exhibited will affect member attributions of intentionality differently depending on member expectations and the appropriateness of the behaviors.

Member Characteristics

Ferris et al. (1995) propose that there are several characteristics of the perceiver, in this case the member, which influence attributions of intentionality he or she makes. In addition to those suggested by Ferris et al., we include two aspects directly related to emotion. The first is member mood prior to the formation of the attribution of intentionality. The second is the concept of emotional intelligence, which we consider it to be a critical dimension influencing the formation of member attributions in response to the leader's emotion-evoking influence attempts (cf. Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000).

Mood, or state affect, is defined by Forgas (1992) as "low intensity, diffuse, and relatively enduring affective states without a salient antecedent cause and therefore very little cognitive content" (p.230). Forgas and George (2001) suggest that moods provide the underlying affective context for most of our behaviors and ongoing thought processes. Consistent with these authors, we propose that the positive or negative mood of the member observing the leader behavior will influence how the member initially perceives that behavior. Specifically, positive mood will be associated with more positive interpretations of the leader's behaviour, while negative mood will be associated with more skeptical interpretations. Thus:

Proposition 5a: When members are in a positive mood, they are more likely to attribute leader behavior to sincere organizational intentions, and therefore to perceive their leader's behavior as true transformational.

Proposition 5b: When members are in a negative mood, they are more likely to attribute leader behavior to manipulative self-serving intentions, and therefore to perceive their leader's behavior as pseudo transformational.

The second aspect of emotions that we include is emotional intelligence. Mayer and Salovey (1997) discuss how emotional intelligence influences individuals' perceptions. For example, if a member is high on emotional intelligence, he or she may have a more accurate perception the leader's behavior, especially when the leader attempts to influence the member's emotional state, therefore resulting in the formation of a more accurate attribution of intentionality. In turn, a more accurate assessment of the leader's motives should lead to a more precise classification (either a true or pseudo transformational leader). Thus:

Proposition 6: Members' emotional intelligence enables them to perceive and to interpret emotional cues more accurately, and therefore will influence the accuracy of their attributions of intentionality flowing from perceptions of leadership behavior.

According to Ferris et al. (1995), a perceiver may be a target or bystander, depending on the degree to which she or he is personally affected by the actor's behavior; the more the individual is personally and emotionally affected, the more of a target they become. If the perceiver is a bystander, she or he is less likely to be emotionally involved, and therefore more likely to make attributions of self-interested, manipulative intentions by the actor (Ferris et al., 1995). Jones (1990) explains that bystanders tend to be removed from the behavior and are therefore more critical of the actor's intentions. Alternatively, if an observer is the target of the behavior, he or she is more likely to perceive the actor's behavior as being sincere. This is because, as Ferris et al. (1995) argue, the observer is too engaged in the interaction to be highly scrutinizing. Thus:

Proposition 7a: A member who is a target of the leader's behavior will be more likely to perceive that behavior as sincere and organizationally focused.

Proposition 7b: A member who is a bystander of the leader's behavior will be more likely to perceive that behavior as manipulative and self-serving.

The final member characteristic that we include in our model, also identified by Ferris et al. (1995), is tenure or organizational experience. Ferris and his colleagues suggest that a more experienced perceiver will be more likely to make attributions of deceitful intentions than a less experienced one, because those with less experience are more naïve and susceptible to impression management tactics. Following this lead, we propose that:

Proposition 8: New members will be less likely than more experienced members to make attributions of manipulative or self-serving intentions.

Prior Interactions Between the Leader and Member

Also consistent with Ferris et al. (1995), we propose that intentionality attributions are influenced by previous interactions between leaders and members and the resulting quality of the relationship. The consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus of the leader's previous behavior will therefore influence members' attributions of intentionality. In this respect, Kelley (1972) defines consistency as the generality of behavior across time and place, distinctiveness as whether behavior is expressed toward a specific target or used generally across all potential targets, and consensus as the generality of behavior across a population of people. In general, negative attributions are associated with behavior that is inconsistent, distinctive, or non-consensual (Ferris et al., 1995). Therefore we propose:

Proposition 9: When the leader's behavior is seen by members to be inconsistent, distinctive, or non-consensual, members are more likely to make negative attributions regarding the leader's intentions, and to see the leader's behavior as pseudo transformational.

In addition, Engle and Lord (1997) found that subordinates liking of their supervisors was correlated with their ratings of leader-member exchange relationship quality; thus, we need to consider liking (or affect for the leader) when examining member perceptions of leader behavior. Meaning may be assigned by members to a leader's behavior according to the degree of affect toward the leader (see Ferris et al., 1995). Therefore, if prior interactions within the leader-member relationship have resulted in the members liking the leader, then members are more likely to make positive attributions about the leader's behaviors. Specifically, we propose:

Proposition 10a: When members have positive affect (based on prior interactions) toward the leader, they are more likely to attribute leader behavior to sincere organizational intentions, and therefore to see their leader as true transformational.

Proposition 10b: When members have negative affect (based on prior interactions) toward the leader, they are more likely to attribute leader behavior to manipulative self-serving intentions, and therefore to see their leader as pseudo transformational.

Member Attributions of Intentionality and Labeling of Leader Influence Attempt

Attribution theory and research suggests that attributions are based on either situational or dispositional cues (Ross & Fletcher, 1985). Research has identified a *fundamental attribution error*, whereby observers tend to make dispositional attributions for actors behaviors, while the actors tend to make situationally based attributions (Martinko & Gardner, 1987; Ross, 1977). Thus, since this paper focuses on members' observations of leaders' behaviors, we base our model on the assumption that a dispositional attribution will be made. We acknowledge that

situational factors may add to the interpretation of the leader's behavior and should not be ignored. Nonetheless, our focus is on the members' perceptions of intentionality and the role of these perceptions in the cognitive evaluation process (see Ferris et al., 1995).

When the prior elements in the model (leader characteristics and behavior, situational norms, member characteristics, and previous interactions in the leader-member relationship) are considered together, the member will attribute the leader's behavior to either positive or negative dispositional causes (see Ferris et al., 1995). The member's attributions about the leader's motives for behavior will determine if the leader's influence attempt is classified as sincere or manipulative.

After members have determined the intention of the actor's influence attempt, the perceivers use the attributions to particular motives as a vehicle to aid interpretation, and then to classify the actor's behavior (Ferris et al., 1995). We suggest that a leader will be labeled as a true transformational leader or a pseudo transformational leader based on attributed motives identified by the members (Weierter, 1997; Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000). Specifically:

Proposition 11a: Members will tend to label the leader as a true transformational leader if his or her behavior is attributed to a sincere effort to benefit the organization and employees (external focus of motivation).

Proposition 11b: Members will tend to label the leader as pseudo transformational if his or her behavior is attributed to a manipulative effort to benefit the leader himself or herself (internal focus of motivation).

Consequences for Member

The model that we present centers on member attributions of intentionality. As Ferris et al. (1995) suggest, however, it is not only the intentions of the leader's behavior that determine

member reactions, but the *consequences* of the behavior also play a role. Ferris et al. (1995) explain how personal consequences for the perceiver, whether they are beneficial or detrimental (opportunities or threats), may moderate the relationship between the perception of the behavior and the reaction by perceivers. For example, pseudo transformational leadership may have negative implications for the organization, but may in fact provide opportunities for a particular member. In this case, positive personal consequences for the member may lead to a favorable response to the leader's influence, irrespective of the legitimacy of the leader's motives. Thus:

Proposition 12: The (beneficial or detrimental) consequences of the leader behavior for the member will moderate the relationship between the member's labeling of the leadership behavior and the resulting impact on the leader-member relationship. Thus, beneficial consequences will lead to the leader being labeled true transformational, and detrimental consequences will lead to the leader being labeled pseudo transformational.

Personal consequences for the member are determined to some extent by the immediate emotional response of the member to the leader's behavior. Cherulnik et al. (2001) provide evidence of a leader's behavior impacting the members' affective state. They found that, when the leader displayed truly charismatic behavior, this behavior had an effect of *emotional contagion*, evoking similar emotional responses in the members who were exposed to the behavior. We propose further therefore that

Proposition 13: The emotional response of members to the leader behavior will moderate the relationship between the member's labeling of the leadership behavior and the resulting impact on the leader-member relationship. Thus, a positive response

will lead to the leader being labeled true transformational, and a negative response will lead to the leader being labeled pseudo transformational.

Effect on Leader-Member Relationships

At the final step in our model, the member's labeling of the leader's influence attempt and the consequences for the member determines his or her affective, attitudinal, and behavioral reactions to the leader-member relationship. Specifically, positive perceptions of leadership attempts (true transformational leadership behavior) and beneficial consequences for the member can be seen to be associated with improved leader-member relationship quality, characterized by increased acceptance, positive affect, and respect for the leader (Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999). Negative perceptions of the leader's influence attempt (pseudo transformational leadership), on the other hand, together with negative consequences for the member, are going to be associated with deterioration in leader-member relationship quality, with increased negative affect and mistrust. Therefore:

Proposition 14a: When members label the leader as a true transformational leader, this will result in increased affect for the leader and a higher quality leader-member relationship.

Proposition 14b: When members label the leader as a pseudo transformational leader, this will result in decreased affect for the leader and a lower quality leader-member relationship.

Summary

The model that we have proposed in this paper is not all-inclusive; we acknowledge that there may be other variables influencing the attribution process. For example, there are contextual factors relevant to the leader-member relationship, such as work group dynamics, the

leader's power, organizational policies, politics, and culture (see Dienesch & Linden, 1986). There are also other important aspects of transformational leadership not incorporated in the model, for example the transformational vision and the intellectual stimulation of members (see Bass, 1998). While these variables are important, they are outside the scope of this model, which focuses specifically on member attributions and emotions.

We also acknowledge the potential for feedback loops in the model, from the dependant variable, "Leader-Member Relationship", back to the "Prior Interaction" variables. In time, the current liking for a leader becomes the liking for a leader based on prior interaction. Since leadership is a process, the model can be viewed as ongoing, where members are continuously perceiving their leaders and re-evaluating their relationship based on prior and current interactions as they occur. Second, like Dienesch & Linden (1986), we acknowledge that the attributional processes may be bypassed under certain conditions. In some cases, members will not consciously label the leader's influence attempt based on attributions of intentionality. As suggested by Feldman (1981, p.129), "...everyday behavior may take place in a thoughtless or mindless fashion".

The model does, however, serve as an exploratory tool to explicate further the nature of relationships between leaders and their members. In particular it draws attention to the role of emotions in the workplace, specifically the role of emotions in the attribution process within the context of leader-member relationships. A feature of the model is that it includes personality characteristics of both the leader and the member. As we noted earlier, leadership cannot take place without the participation of members. In this respect, we posit that the recent construct of emotional intelligence is included on both sides of the equation. In particular emotional intelligence on the part of the leader can make it more likely that she or he can disguise

illegitimate manipulative leadership attempts, leading to inappropriate categorization of leadership as true transformational leadership. To counter this, the emotionally intelligent member is likely to be better equipped to detect such deception.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Implications for Theory and Research

The model developed in this paper makes several contributions to theoretical development. In particular, we respond to Weierter's (1997) view that the member's role in shaping the leader-member relationship needs more recognition. As Cherulnik et al. (2001) stress, leadership can only be partially understood by observing the behavior of the leader, it is equally important to study those toward whom the leadership style is addressed. We also address Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) notion that leader-member exchange (LMX) and transformational leadership are linked. The model we have set out in this article would thus seem to provide a more conceptually useful approach than the traditional models of transformational leadership, where leadership is not something that is accomplished by the leaders themselves, but is a process involving a social interaction of leaders and their members (cf. Calder, 1977). Our model also contributes to theory by offering a model that includes the 'dark side' of transformational leadership.

Our model builds in particular upon the idea that leadership is a process of social interaction (Calder, 1977; Martinko & Gardner, 1987), rather than a construct that exists in isolation from other theories of social psychology. The attribution model is one such approach, and has become a useful tool in the organizational sciences (see Martinko, 1995). Further, our theory presents leadership as a process that is ultimately founded in cognitive processes,

consistent with Fiol and Huff's (1992) call to investigate the way that organizational managers and members cognitively map and view their environment.

A further theoretical implication of our model is the identification of the role of emotion and emotional intelligence in the attribution process. The construct of emotional intelligence is still being developed and has been the subject of considerable controversy, as we noted earlier in this article. We believe, however, that this new variable has untapped potential to provide valuable insight into the process of perceiving leadership behaviors and differentiating between pseudo and true transformational leadership. Like George (2000), we consider emotional intelligence from a rigorous perspective, through incorporating the variable into theoretical models. While we recognize that research into the emotional intelligence construct is still in a developmental phase (see Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000), we agree with George (2000) that research into the potential of this construct in leadership should be a priority.

A further issue is that our theory can be seen as employing a multi-level framework. For example, leaders may behave differently towards different members and different groups of members. The independent variables within the model are considered at an individual level of analysis; however, the concern is with the resulting leader-member relationship quality – a group level phenomenon. Rousseau (1985) and Kozlowski and Klein (2000) have called for increased attention to multi-level issues. Some leadership researchers such as Cogliser and Schriesheim (2000), and Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, and Yammarino (2001), have already examined the leader-member exchange relationship from a multi-level perspective. Clearly, subsequent research based on our theory will need to be conducted within such a framework.

Finally, we note that, although portions of this model have been tested, the model in its entirety has not been examined empirically. Research is needed to establish the exact

mechanisms of attribution of intentionality in the leader-member relationship, and the role of emotions in this process. In this respect, opportunities exist for laboratory and field research based around the attribution paradigm (see Martinko, 1995; Martinko & Gardner, 1987).

Implications for Practice

The model in this paper also has practical implications. The quality of the leader-member relationship depends on how the members perceive their leaders (Weierter, 1997). Ashkanasy and Tse (2000) note in this respect that leader-member relationships can have a profound impact on employee motivation and work effectiveness. Gerstner and Day (1997), for example, reported that leader-member relationship quality is related to job performance, satisfaction with supervision, overall satisfaction, commitment, role conflict, role clarity, member competence, and turnover intentions. Reichheld (2001) notes similarly that exemplary organizational leaders maintain high quality relationships with all stakeholders, including employees.

There are also practical implications concerning emotional intelligence. George (2000) has argued that emotionally intelligent leaders can promote effectiveness at all levels in organizations. Transformational leaders may wish to improve their emotional intelligence, for the purposes of ensuring correct expression and interpretation of their goals and intentions (see Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; Jordan et al., in press). Our model suggests further that it may be just as important for members to be high on emotional intelligence, so they can identify and resist illegitimate leadership attempts by pseudo transformational leaders. In this instance, organizations may benefit through identifying those with low emotional intelligence and then provide training to increase the members' ability to perceive leader emotion-evoking behaviors.

A further important practical outcome of our model concerns employees' understanding of how to 'read' leadership influence attempts. Indeed, the implications of this point go well beyond the confines of work organizations. Conger (1990) has drawn our attention to the destructive nature of maladapted leadership, and the tragic events of September 11, 2001 have provided us ample evidence of this. If we can understand and improve our ability to detect pseudo transformational leadership, this should lead to more effective organizations and a safer and more socially adaptive environment for everyone.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have presented a model that focuses on the role of emotions and attributions of intentionality within the leader-member relationship. We have suggested that, through the process of attributing intentionality, members are able to differentiate between true and pseudo transformational leadership styles. Our model includes an emotional dimension, where emotional intelligence is argued both to facilitate true transformational leadership and also potentially to provide a mechanism whereby Machiavellian leaders can disguise their intentions. On the other side of the relationship, we argue that member emotional intelligence can play a role in identifying illegitimate leadership influence attempts.

Finally, our model reinforces the notion that emotions are implicitly at the core of management practice and leader-member interactions in particular. In this respect, leaders' emotion, leaders' attempts to evoke emotion in their members, and organizational members' reactions to emotion-evoking leadership behaviors directly impact employee behaviors and productivity (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Weiss & Brief, 2001; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Ashkanasy, Härtel & Zerbe, 2000). Academic research specifically on emotions has only emerged recently, however, so progress on identifying and explaining the role of emotion in

workplace settings is only in its infancy. Our hope is that the model presented in this paper will contribute positively to development of our understanding of the role and perception of emotions in leader-member engagements, and ultimately to our understanding of cognitive and affective processes in organizational settings.

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Figure 1. A Model of Emotions and Attribution of Intentionality in Leader-Member

Relationships

